



AFRICAN VIOLET NEWS

FALL 1962

BRING YOUR GARDENING INDOORS NOW!



ATHENA SPURS INTEREST IN AFRICAN VIOLETS

The past year has seen further evidence of the popularity of the African Violet with the introduction of Hi-Hill Garden's Athena. Popularized by feature articles in LIFE Magazine and FLOWER GROWER MAGAZINE, Athena has created a lively interest among indoor gardeners everywhere. The following article, reprinted from FLOWER GROWER, The Home Garden Magazine, testifies to the enthusiasm created by this pert and pretty African Violet.

IT'S AN AFRICAN-VIOLET! The gleaming white double flowers sport ruffled petals edged in lavender-blue, borne above quilted and scalloped leaves. Hybridized by Paul E. Desautels, an African-violet hobbyist, 'Athena' is the result of a breeding program designed to produce a flower with the size, quality and vigor of the supreme or tetraploid varieties without the slow-growing, sparse-flowering and brittle foliage of the supremes. 'Athena' bowed to society in 1961 at the African-Violet Convention, French Lick, Indiana.

African-violets are one of the easiest to grow and most popular of all flowering house plants. Good light, living room temperature, humusy soil and regular fertilizing and watering are about all they need to put forth flowers in abundance.

USE THESE HANDY TIPS FOR YOUR AFRICAN VIOLETS

Here are some helpful tips as to the care of African Violet plants. You should be able to not only keep your plants healthy, but they should provide a wealth of blooms as well. African Violets can and are being grown most successfully in homes across the nation.

HUMIDITY — Violets like a high humidity. This is difficult to provide in most homes. Bottom watering helps, but since humidity is almost always a problem, proper watering becomes especially important. Occasional spraying of plants with warm water early in the day is helpful. Keep sun from wet foliage. Rooms should be well ventilated to allow outside air and moisture to reach your plants when possible. Avoid strong drafts or chilling. Insufficient humidity can cause buds to dry up in their early stages.

WATER—Keep soil moderately moist, neither extremely wet nor dry. If you bottom water (and this is a good method) simply add water to the saucer under the pot, but allow saucer to dry completely between waterings. It is a good idea to top water occasionally (with warm water) to redistribute fertilizer in the pots. Excess watering will rot the root system causing the loss of leaves and poor growth in general. Insufficient watering will keep the plant from growing thus preventing it from blooming.

TEMPERATURE — Violets are tropical plants and they should have a fairly warm temperature. Try to grow them in the range of 70°-75°F. during the day and 60°-65°F. at night. High temperature may cause immature dropping of flowers. It may also cause blasting of buds or small flowers of poor quality. Temperatures ranging below 60° for lengthy periods of time will harden plants and also affect the development of flower buds.

FERTILIZERS — It is always best to use weaker applications of fertilizer more frequently than to use heavy applications less frequently. Violets like a soil of medium fertility. If your plants are growing actively use a balanced feed about once a month. Soluble feeds are good, if used as directed. Guard against excessive feeding, and if plants look stunted and yellow, consider the possibility that they might be overfed. When feeding small or newly potted plants, use fertilizer at one-half strength.

LIGHT — Be sure there is sufficient light, but avoid strong or intense sun heat. Light intense enough to cast a barely visible shadow is ideal. Light intensity is the deciding factor in bud set. Insufficient light will prevent violets from forming buds. Excess light will cause foliage to harden and turn yellow in color. Always remember that, "More light will generally bring a shy bloomer into flower." People often give their plants too little light. Violets even like some direct sunlight, though prolonged exposure will cause a yellowing or "sunburn." It is generally advisable to select the brightest window of your home and then provide a little shade (curtain, etc.) when the sun becomes too intense.

ARTIFICIAL LIGHT — Light intensity is the important factor for bud set; when using fluorescent light a minimum of 300 foot candles of light should be obtained. The light should be on approximately 14-16 hours per day at a height of 15 inches above the tops of the plant. Some people cannot find a sufficiently bright

(Continued on Page 3)

America's Finest African Violets



GROWING, GROWING, GROWING!

BRING YOUR GARDENING INDOORS NOW

Our pledge of continued service is backed by over ten years of sending "Violets by Mail." During this time we have made successful shipments to all parts of the world. Throughout 1962 we will continue to produce and offer only the best Violet varieties backed by our experience of 80 years of uninterrupted flower growing.

At Fischer greenhouses you can always be sure of:

- Highest Quality
- Budget Economy
- Prompt, Safe Delivery
- Guaranteed Satisfaction

Growers and Hybridizers of America's Finest
African Violets
producing over 150,000 plants annually

Fischer
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About Our African Violets

Our regular plants are well established African Violets that arrive at your home either in bud, ready to bloom, or in full bloom. These African Violets are grown with the utmost care and are shipped to you so that you may enjoy immediate satisfaction from their beautiful hearty blossoms.

Our starter plants are African Violets made available far below regular cost. For our customers who like to grow their own stock, starter plants are an ideal and economical answer. These are young, vigorous, well-established plants in 2¼" pots. They offer many advantages over rooted cuttings, since there is no transplanting set back and plants will bloom more quickly.

Our fresh cuttings are leaves that are freshly cut from Fischer's named varieties. Packed so that they will remain fresh, these Fresh Cuttings are rushed to your home so that you may enjoy the thrills of rooting and growing your own stock. A thrilling and economical way to enhance and diversify your collection.

The African Violet Society of America

When the African Violet finally wins its way with you as it has with so many people, it is then time to further your enjoyment and interest in their culture by joining the African Violet Society of America, and receive their quarterly publication, "The African Violet Magazine." For membership blanks and further information send a card with your address to:—

AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

P. O. Box 1326 • Knoxville, Tennessee

A NEW PLANT FOR INDOOR GARDENERS



May We Present

The Slipper Gloxinia — a companion plant for your violets

It's new. It's compact. It's red. It's a hybrid Slipper Gloxinia and it's the most promising violet companion plant that we've seen since the episcia first found popularity some ten years ago.

We first grew a red slipper gloxinia hybrid that Dr. Reed of the Univ. of Minnesota had developed and passed on to our friend, Henry Peterson of Cincinnati. It looked like a regular gloxinia in miniature. We were impressed with the bright color of bloom, the small habit of growth (plant size perhaps 8-10" in diameter) and the apparent year round growth of the plant without dormancy. We had been familiar, of course, with the regular gloxinia with its large leaves that made it unsuited for windowsill culture, and the dormancy which limited the growing season. It may be too early to know for sure, but it now appears that the new slipper requires only slightly more light than a violet and definitely less light than the regular gloxinia. Fluorescent light growing with the grolux lamps also looks promising, and the year round growth without dormancy, of course seems most exciting. The plant tends to show an elongation of the stem with age, but we have had success in periodically pinching the growth back to three or four sets of leaves, allowing breaks to come from the bottom of the plant.

But the work with this one new plant has only been the start of what appears to be a fascinating experiment in plant development that lies ahead. Paul Rockelmann has been making numerous crosses between the new slipper and the usual slipper types, and with some of the other gloxinia species in an effort to improve colors, increase flower size and blooming habit, but still keep the small growing nature of the slipper. The results to date have been exciting as literally hundreds of seedlings have now been flowered, with characteristics that show interesting variations and improvements from the original types. It would appear possible to develop a whole new series of varieties — so prepare to clear another windowsill! We think that exotic new colors on the plants will bloom the year around and that will grow under light conditions favoring violets will soon be here.

We have been so impressed with the first seedlings that we are making available limited quantities for your experimentation. We would welcome your comments and observations as you grow them and try them along with us. Complete growing instructions will be enclosed with all orders.

Briefly, general growing rules are about the same as the violets. Favor the plants with more light than you give the violets, or grow them under fluorescents, again trying to use a slightly higher light intensity or longer light exposure. The temperature, water and fertilizer requirements are about the same as the violets, and no special insect controls beyond what the violets need, are required. With the growing habit of the plant resulting in a longer stem, pinching to develop bottom breaks does seem important. To date, we have not found the need to rest the plants, even those that had grown continually for more than a year, provided that proper growing conditions were maintained.

We feel that the new slipper gloxinias, in their various hybrid types, are going to find a place in the windowsill gardens of tomorrow and we invite you to try a plant now, experiment with them and get a preview of a coming thing.

"African" Violets Are Now "American"

C. W. Fischer, Jr., Linwood, New Jersey

America loves African violets. The affection seems genuine and the prospects for a lasting romance appear excellent. With a marriage imminent, the little flower, like any new bride, must prepare to change her name. Henceforth, therefore, with tongue in cheek and a wink at our native woodland posy, we will think of our heroine as the "American" violet.

The appellation seems to us a fitting one. For have we not lifted this poor little flower, discovered a mere 60 years ago on the jungle floor in darkest Africa, from a position of complete obscurity to notoriety unequalled in the house plant world? Indeed, we've brought the plant to our shores, nursed it, bred it, trained it, studied it until today, it's queen, queen of the American indoor garden scene. Let's look in a bit more detail at what we actually have done.

First, Americans have cultivated the plant so widely that today there are more violets grown than any other indoor blooming plant. Why is this? The "American" violet growers have found that the little violet will "work" under many indoor conditions, rewarding them with flowers in situations where other plants will not grow or bloom. So we find violets in apartments, mansions, humble dwellings, offices, everywhere. The violet has further proved its flexibility by blooming beautifully under fluorescent light, without ever seeing the light of day. This characteristic makes the plant adaptable to basement culture on lighted racks or stands. And the more sophisticated grower may put his violets in interesting lighted areas in the living or dining room. Room dividers, unused fireplaces, empty bookshelves all are potential fluorescent gardens. This marvelous adaptability and the happy trait of growing under relatively low light, even fluorescent light, have made the violet a practical and unequalled indoor plant.

The mere fact that the "African" violet has been adopted and is now widely grown is only part of the story of its "Americanization". Much of our contribution has come through the intensive hybridization and plant breeding work that has been performed by the scientists and the commercial people, particularly during the last 20 years. As a result, we now have new colors, forms and sizes that the original "African" type would never have thought possible. The breeders, through careful crossing and occasional selection of "sports" or mutants now have bright flowers, nearly red in color, fine variegated flower types, brilliant pinks and sparkling whites. New forms first came when doubles appeared some 15 years ago, and since then frilled types have been developed. Just lately a whole series of "Star" varieties, symmetrical star-shaped flowers, have been created. Many of these have gigantic blossoms, some as huge as 3" in diameter. Through hybridization, another less spectacular, but more important change has come about. The breeders have consciously and unconsciously selected plants for the rather vague characteristic of "performance". As new varieties have come about we have gradually accumulated types that seem to "do better" for people. Freer bloomers and faster growers have gradually made their way to the fore. Plants that can actually survive and bloom under less light have been discovered. So today, we have far hardier, more showy types in our "American" violets that we would ever have thought possible, knowing the original "African" violet as it emerged from the jungle.

How To Produce Good Bloom On African Violets

C. W. Fischer, Jr.

The durable little African Violet remains more securely than ever at the top of the house plant popularity list. And a survey of the field of possible contenders indicates that it will remain unchallenged in this position for a number of years to come. Why, for the last ten years, has the African Violet been America's most popular house plant? What is the reason for this position of pre-eminence? It's because the violet, of all the flowering ornamentals, is unique in its ability to bloom under conditions that can be maintained in the average home. We have no other flowering plant that can give year-round bloom, is "compact", has great variety and thrives in the indoor scene, save this humble violet. There is apparently no other plant that so adequately meets these specifications.

Yet perhaps not the least of the violet's fascination derives from the fact that, with all its attributes, there still remains the element of "challenge" in the growing of the plant. Good flowering is still not a 100% certainty on every window sill in every home. Perhaps, if the African Violet were a "sure winner", a sure bloomer under every circumstance, much of the adventure and thrill of accomplishment would be lacking, and interest might actually wane. As I talk with hundreds of violet enthusiasts and would be enthusiasts, I can always be certain that in any group, a goodly number of folks will volunteer their problems in the handling of the plant and talk, with less than boundless joy, of the performance of the plants in their home. And the problem that these folks raise, nine

times out of ten, pertains to scarcity or absence of bloom. The common complaint is simply, "When I got the violets from the greenhouse or the flower show, they had good bloom and nice buds. The buds opened, but few or no flowers have come along since. I suppose that the violets are "resting" but they never seem to wake up. Why?"

To this common, almost universal complaint I trot out a general answer and a little story. The answer, "Friends, the plants probably need more light." The true story that I tell involves two retired ladies from Philadelphia who came down to live in Atlantic City. They brought with them, among their possessions, their non-blooming, though healthy African Violets, their wire haired terriers and a nice portfolio of investments, the income from which was to maintain them in retired life. I visited these folks in their new home shortly after they arrived and commented that I could be of little help to them in their handling of the dogs or in the placing of their investments, but regards the non-blooming African Violets I felt that I could offer a good suggestion. My thought was, that now that the people had retired and time was not the most important factor in their lives, they could spend a few extra minutes with the plants and move these non-bloomers each day from the morning light window over, in the PM to the afternoon light window. They should, essentially, let the violets follow the sun. I suggested that they do this for about a month and then I would reinspect. So, faithfully for this month my friends shifted their violets from morning to afternoon light and back again the next morning. I returned four weeks later. Sure enough, the violets had come back into good bud and some blossoms were starting to unfold. Strangely enough, during the same period, one of the dogs had had puppies, and perhaps, best of all, the stock market had registered a sharp advance. Whether or not there is a connection between blooming African Violets and rising stock prices is a matter for the security analyst's contemplation, but of this I am sure, that the added light that these plants received converted the non-bloomers back into blooming plants, and all this in only a month.

Bring Your Gardening Indoors Now!

(Continued from Page 1)

spot or perhaps they want to have violets in dark spots in the home. These folks should investigate FLUORESCENT GARDENING. Violets, Episcias and many other plants grow beautifully under fluorescent light. (Complete details may be found in "An Easy Guide to African Violets".

DISEASES — The two most common diseases are stem rot and powdery mildew. Main stems rot because of bacterial infection from the soil, etc. The most effective remedy is to apply orthocide or fermate to the infected area. If this fails remove the top of plants above rotted area and re-root as a tip cutting. At times powdery mildew is troublesome during the winter and spring months. This is the same mildew that will form on clothing during prolonged damp weather. This can be controlled by dusting lightly with Flowers of Sulphur.

POTTING — African violets should be repotted in a good, tested African Violet soil at least once per year as constant watering, etc. will leach out certain elements or else the plants will consume them. For those who only have a few violets it is best to purchase ready mixed, reliable violet potting soil. The violets that you purchase need not be repotted for several months. However, do not let plants become "potbound". When transplanting or dividing violets, use sterilized soil. You can sterilize your own by heating to 180 F. for thirty minutes. A well prepared soil should have good drainage and ample organic matter. Use Vermiculite or Perlite to "loosen" the soil. When repotting it is best to ruff-up the root system a little to encourage new root action. Do not remove or destroy the root system. Also, do not over-pot your violets as flowering will be retarded. A 4"-8" spread is ideal for 3" pots, and an 8"-12" spread should be placed in 4" shallow pots.

SOIL — Violets are grown in many soil mixtures. For the beginner it is best to purchase some ready mixed violet soil. For those who wish to grow many African Violets, it may be more economical to mix your own soil. A good basic soil mixture is as follows:

1/3 good loam
2/3 leaf mold, hyperhumus
2 lbs. limestone per bu. of mixture
1/2 lb. super phosphate per bu. of mixture
Add enough vermiculite, perlite, sponge rock or sharp sand to make mixture loose and airy.

Sterilize soil by heating to 180 for 30 minutes. The soil should be loose and well drained to encourage good root action. After 3 or 4 weeks of being potted in this soil you can begin applying weak solutions of African Violet fertilizer at 3 or 4 week intervals.

LOCATION — Violets can be grown and flowered in any exposure providing there is ample light (see light) and ample humidity. If most of your house seems dry, try growing them in your kitchen as cooking will provide some of the needed humidity.

ORDER NOW AND ENJOY YOUR VIOLETS ALL WINTERLONG!

☐ **THE SLIPPER GLOXINIA**—A newly hybridized miniature Gloxinia as described on page 2 \$1.25

1963 Preview

- ☐ **RASPBERRY SPLASH**—A semi-double tu-tone in raspberry & white. Diminutive grower \$1.50
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- ☐ **MINIATURE ORCHID**—Small, cupped, single white fringed blossoms. A semi-miniature with orchid markings in the center. Wavy leaves r.p./n.a. s.p./ .35 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **SEA HAWK**—A very outstanding, giant, frilled dark purple single. Blossoms high above strong and gently waved foliage r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **NOBILITY**—Large raspberry pink double blossoms with shiny green foliage. A symmetrical grower r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **FISCHER'S FOLLIES**—Giant, medium blue, ruffled, double flowers. Attractive, waved foliage r.p./\$2.00 s.p./ \$1.25 f.c./ .50
- ☐ **CARNATION FRILLED WHITE**—A very frilled and fully double white showing traces of green edging on petals. A unique and novel variety r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **PINK JADE**—Huge, full double pink with some chartreuse edging. An exotic performer. Nicely waved foliage r.p./n.a. s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **LAVENDER CARIBBEAN**—Huge blue lavender with full double blossoms many with yellow pollen centers. A symmetrical grower and excellent bloomer r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **CHOPSTICKS**—A variegated, blue and white semi-double. A profuse bloomer r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **SMOKE RINGS**—Giant semi-double blue Geneva. Fine dark glossy foliage r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **GALA PINK**—Fringed pink with deeper pink edging. A semi-double with attractive, slightly waved foliage r.p./\$2.00 s.p./ \$1.25 f.c./ .50

POSTAL INSTRUCTIONS

MINIMUM ORDER \$4.00

Please send check or money order with your order. No. C. O. D. We pay postage on plant orders of \$10.00 or more. Please add 50c to help defray mailing expense on smaller orders. In case of loss or damage to plant in transit, please notify us immediately.

Check the Violets You Want. Then Circle the Size. For Example:

- ☒ **WISTERIA**—Large frilled single blossoms of rich wisteria color. Beautifully waved foliage. A nice addition to any collection. r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35

THEN TEAR OFF THIS ENTIRE PAGE AND MAIL TO FISCHER GREENHOUSES, LINWOOD, NEW JERSEY, ALONG WITH YOUR CHECK OR MONEY ORDER

IMPORTANT PRICING INFORMATION

Following each plant description you will find three prices listed. The first price refers to the Regular Plant price; the second price refers to the Starter Plant price; the third price refers to the Fresh Cutting price; n.a. means that the plant is not available in that particular form.

- ☐ **GIGI**—Large double blossoms and dark green foliage. A strong grower selected from hundreds of seedlings. Our best fringed double pink r.p./n.a. s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **PURPLE CAROUSEL**—Giant ruffled, double purple flowers. Deep green waved foliage r.p./\$2.00 s.p./ \$1.25 f.c./ .50
- ☐ **TINSEL**—A bright blue double with a good white edge. A heavy flowering semi-miniature r.p./\$2.00 s.p./ \$1.25 f.c./ .50
- ☐ **DANCING WATERS IMPROVED**—An outstanding pink Geneva double with erect flower stems and waved foliage r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **EXOTIC**—Giant, deeply fringed double white. Bright pollen center, with waved foliage r.p./n.a. s.p./ \$1.25 f.c./ .50
- ☐ **FLIRT**—A very fine double full lilac lavender with crepe-edge petals and showing much yellow pollen. Medium green, slightly waved foliage r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **SATURN**—Very large double blue flowers showing much pollen. Unusual light edging on flower petals. A vigorous grower r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **REDDERNESS**—A real wine red, semi-miniature double. Fine bright color, and dark green foliage r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **ORIENTALE**—A raspberry fringed semi-double with some chartreuse edging. Deep green, waved foliage r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **BLOSSOM TIME**—Huge ruffled, royal blue double blossoms. Bright pollen centers with waved foliage r.p./\$2.00 s.p./ \$1.25 f.c./ .50
- ☐ **EXECUTIVE**—Large double, red lavender. A profuse bloomer r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **WHITE BOUQUET**—Large, full, double white blossoms. A symmetrical grower. r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **COQUETTE**—Very full, frilled deep lavender double blossoms. Spectacular in full bloom. Slightly waved foliage r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **ELIZABETH DURKIN**—Heavy flowering, very frilled, clear double pink with long graceful flower stems and pretty waved foliage r.p./\$1.50 s.p./ .85 f.c./ .35
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- ☐ **HI-HILL GARDEN'S ATHENA**—Giant frilled, double white flowers with a bright blue band on the outer edge. A strong grower with supreme foliage. As featured in LIFE magazine November 17, 1961 r.p./\$1.00 s.p./ .75 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **CHERRY PINK**—Giant flowering, deep pink single with tall flower stems, r.p./\$1.00 s.p./ .75 f.c./ .35
- ☐ **CARIBBEAN**—Giant, bright blue blossoms with attractive, waved foliage and showing much pollen r.p./\$1.00 s.p./ .75 f.c./ .35

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